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SUBJECT : Arab Reaction to U.S. Change of Policy

1. The following discussion of Arab opinion regarding the U.S. change of policy on partition and to trusteeship appeared in the Jewish Agency's Weekly Summary of Arab Information (Palestine) No. 13/48, 28 March 1948:

"The first Arab reactions to Warren Austin's statement announcing America's withdrawal of support for Partition were of a joyful nature. The Arab press believed that the Jews had been plunged into a state of despondency. Nevertheless, a note of reserve crept into the attitude soon after Austin's statement, and this naturally grew more marked following President Truman's utterance. The Arabs are now beginning to fear that America's withdrawal of support for Partition is due, not so much to objection to Partition in principle, as to the difficulties of implementation. The Arab States consider they have achieved a victory by bringing about the abandonment of Partition. They regard all other issues as of secondary importance. According to the resolutions passed by the Arab League's Political Committee, the prosecution of the political struggle has been entrusted to the Arab representatives at Lake Success.

"Arab political circles are trying to exploit the victory provided them by the U.S.A. for internal purposes. It is not mere coincidence that the proposed alterations to the Syrian Constitution, enabling the re-election of President QUNATLI were approved soon after the statement by Warren Austin. Jamil MARDAN is now trying to exploit the opportunity presented to gain parliamentary approval for the agreement with TAPLine. (The company's attitude towards the Syrian agreement, and indeed the entire question of laying the pipe-line, are not altogether clear owing to the tense international situation). In view of the success gained by the League, 'AZZAM also hopes to settle the Syrian-Lebanese dispute and prepare the ground for the forthcoming meeting of the League Council on the 15 April, which will consider the major issue of a uniform Arab foreign policy (treaties with the English-speaking countries, the question of an Eastern Bloc, regional defence, and a Pan-Arab military alliance). The widespread Arab optimism on these issues was somewhat marred by the demonstrations in Baghdad and Cairo against the new Anglo-Transjordan agreement.

"Although the League's Political Committee stressed its support of an independent Arab Palestine, the League is undoubtedly prepared to agree to a temporary trusteeship, possibly even British. Camille CHAM'UN stated that, as an alternative to immediate independence, the Arabs

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would agree to a short period of trusteeship. A similar utterance was made by 'AIZAN. The statement by Dr. Abd-al-Mu'ti KHAYAL, head of the Arab League's Political Department, who told "Ahram" that Britain might be made the trustee, can possibly be taken as a sign that the Arabs might agree to such a step.

"However, the MUFTI and his associates have expressed uncompromising opposition to the idea of a trusteeship. Similar views have been expressed by local Arab leaders in Palestine. Ahmad HILMI Pasha was the only leader to suggest that the Arabs might agree to a trusteeship held by one of the Arab States. Evidently he voices the opinion of pre-League circles. Presumably all the MUFTI's opponents at this juncture would prefer trusteeship to the MUFTI's autocracy.

"The Arabs are not prepared to take up a final stand on the question of a truce before the Security Council reaches a definite decision, or the Jews withdraw their claims. The Arab Higher Executive is opposed to a truce. The League has stated that it will favor a truce if the Jews abandon Partition; but in fact it would seem that the League is ready to make some concessions on this point. The Arabs have rejected the American proposal for direct Jewish-Arab negotiations."

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